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Box 4, Folder 27, "Global Reach - Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, AJC's Agenda Straddles the World", Spring 1985.

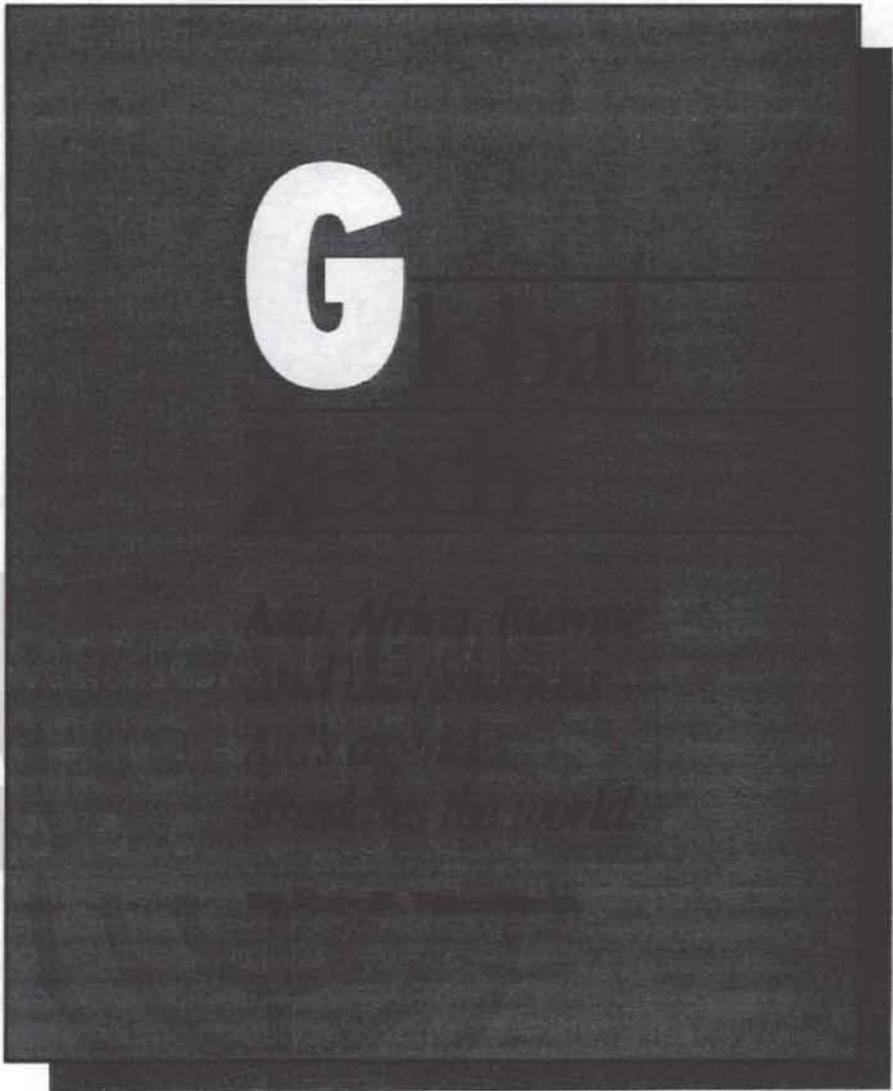
WHAT IS A JEWISH ORGANIZATION like the American Jewish Committee doing with such people as French President François Mitterrand, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Italian Foreign Minister Guilio Andreotti, Spanish Foreign Minister Fernando Moran, European Parliament President Pierre Pflimlin, Argentinian President Raoul Alfonsín, Brazilian President Tancredo Neves, UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar and Pope John Paul II?

In Jewish life, it is generally taken for granted that major Jewish organizations such as the AJC will be related in meaningful ways with Israel and her top leaders and with this country's key officials. It is less well known that the AJC carries on an international program that seeks to establish relations with the heads of state and other major leaders of countries in Western Europe, Central and South America, Asia and Africa—and with the United Nations.

The long-standing operational assumption which underlines the AJC's domestic programs—that the welfare and security of American Jews is integrally linked to the state of health of constitutional democracy, the rule of law and religious-racial-ethnic pluralism in our nation—is equally valid for the situation of Jewish communities elsewhere. The well-being of Jews throughout the world is intimately linked to the political and social climate of their societies. Beyond this, the foreign policies and economic strategies of governments in Western Europe and Central and South America have deep implications for the security of Israel, Soviet Jews and such "endangered" Jewish communities as those in Syria, Iran, Ethiopia and Yemen.

Above all, world Jewry has a profound stake in resisting the expansion of totalitarianism of the right or left, in opposing the spread of terrorism and violence, upholding and strengthening constitutional democracies, supporting civil and political liberties,

Marc H. Tanenbaum directs the American Jewish Committee's International Relations Department.



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and strengthening human rights.

If these objectives are to be more than rhetorical pieties, they must be sought in a serious, informed way, focusing on the policies and decisions being made in many places that can either inhibit or advance Jewish and American democratic principles.

For these reasons, in recent years the AJC's International Relations Department—initially chaired by Gordon Zacks of Columbus, Ohio, and currently under the dedicated leadership of Leo Nevas of Westport, Connecticut—has systematically worked at forging a comprehensive foreign affairs program.

One aspect of this program focuses on traditional AJC priorities: defending Israel's security, opposing enemies of Israel and world Jewry in the United States and abroad, advocating the cause of Soviet Jewry, aiding endangered Jewish communities in the Mid-

dle East, Africa, and South America, combatting anti-Semitism wherever it springs up and strengthening fraternal ties with Jewish communities which seek our assistance and solidarity. The other major area of activity concentrates on the larger picture: the governments, regional groups and international organizations with foreign policies and economic programs that directly or indirectly affect Israel and world Jewish communities.

Following are recent examples of major AJC activities on the international scene:

In June 1984, AJC President Howard I. Friedman led a delegation of officers and International Relations Commission members in a cordial, frank dialogue with UN Secretary General Pérez de Cuellar at his UN Offices. Against the background of the AJC's singular standing as a pioneer human rights agency, the group ex-

AJC has a large credit deposit in the international 'consciousness bank.'

pressed its deep concern about the anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish attacks that have been taking place regularly in UN forums. We called for a more assertive response by the Secretary General and UN member nations to this pattern of "verbal violence" against Israel and Jews which, we said, violated the UN charter and the world body's declarations. Finally, we gave Mr. de Cuellar an AJC aide-memoire documenting such anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish abuses.

During the past two years, the International Relations Department conducted a series of wide-ranging discussions with the presidents, foreign ministers and defense, interior, justice and commerce ministers of the European community—particularly, France, West Germany, Spain, Italy and the European Parliament. Important meetings were also held with the presidents and foreign ministers of Argentina and Mexico, Hungarian government officials, the foreign minister of Guatemala and key U.S. State Department officials.

On each of these occasions, AJC leaders presented these basic concerns and recommendations:

- It is essential and would be very helpful for these governments to become assertive in opposing anti-Jewish and anti-Israel attacks at the UN and other international bodies. (The AJC memorandum detailing these attacks was presented to each governmental official.)

- Greater systematic support of human rights and the cause of Soviet and Syrian Jewries is also vital. (Aides-memoire on "Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union" and "Syrian Jewry" were left with each of these foreign leaders.)

- Consistent, concerted efforts by democratic nations are needed to counter the P.L.O. and international terrorism which threaten all nations.

- Finally, the AJC's support of governments and nations that uphold constitutional democracy, oppose all forms of totalitarianism, and advance the cause of universal human rights was reaffirmed.

In addition, the International Re-

lations Department has held meetings with ambassadors and ministers of numerous foreign embassies and at the UN during which these questions were raised. In a number of local communities, AJC chapter leaders met with consul generals to reinforce the messages that were being communicated in foreign capitals and Washington embassies.

Heartening responses to these AJC efforts came from several quarters. Among the most important were the UN Secretary-General's expressions of displeasure about anti-Jewish attacks which he voiced in his September 1984 Annual Report to the UN, as well as in his address to the AJC's May



1984 Annual Meeting. According to Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Ambassador to the UN, there was a substantial decline in anti-Israel attacks during the last session of the UN's General Assembly.

And during his highly-publicized trip to the Soviet Union, France's President François Mitterrand publicly criticized that country's violation of the human rights of Andrei Sakharov and of Soviet Jewish dissidents. (Earlier, the French president had invited Theo Klein, president of CRIF, the French Jewish communal body, to be an official member of his delegation to Moscow.) In response to our request, President Mitterrand called on the French Embassy in Moscow to become

more directly involved in the situation of Soviet Jewry.

After the AJC had made several interventions with Chancellor Helmut Kohl and other high officials, West Germany gave up its announced sale of arms to Saudi Arabia. In addition, the West German Minister of Culture agreed to convene a conference of women leaders from West Germany, Israel and the United States to prepare a cooperative strategy in anticipation of the Nairobi conference on women's issues to be held next July.

President Raoul Alfonsín and Foreign Minister Dante Caputo of Argentina, as well as President Tancredo Neves of Brazil assured AJC representatives that they would end the anti-Israel voting pattern of their representatives in the UN and other international bodies. Italian Foreign Minister Guilio Andreotti and Defense Minister Spadolini told the AJC their country would continue political, military and economic support of Israel in the context of encouraging peaceful negotiations in the Middle East.

What has been distinctive in our approach is that heads of state and their ministers have almost universally acknowledged with appreciation the fact that the AJC is not a "single issue" Jewish organization. They expressed awareness of the AJC's long record of contributions through the Jacob Blaustein Institute on Human Rights to the advancement of civil and political liberties for all peoples. And they know of our singular work in many parts of the world in aiding refugees—including the Vietnamese boat people, victims of the Ethiopian and African famine and Haitian, Cuban, Afghan and Polish refugees.

Thus, the AJC has developed a large deposit of moral credit in the international "consciousness bank." Certainly that is good for the moral health of the human family, but it is especially effective in defending the interest and promoting the well-being of our fellow Jews throughout the world who have, as always, been our priority concern. ■